

I can't find my plug-ins

Q I'm running Sony Acid Music Studio on my Windows XP PC and have a number of third-party (mostly free) plug-ins installed in both DirectX and VST formats. However, not all of them are accessible from within Acid, and the ones I want are buried among various mysterious plug-ins that make my PC crash if I try to use them.

Derrick Barringer

A For those that don't know, DirectX and VST plug-ins are open standards that allow effects and software MIDI synthesisers (known as virtual instruments) to be used inside recording software from another manufacturer. The two types are used in exactly the same way, but their installation routines are quite different: DirectX plug-ins are registered with Windows; VST plug-ins simply exist as a .dll file in a designated folder.

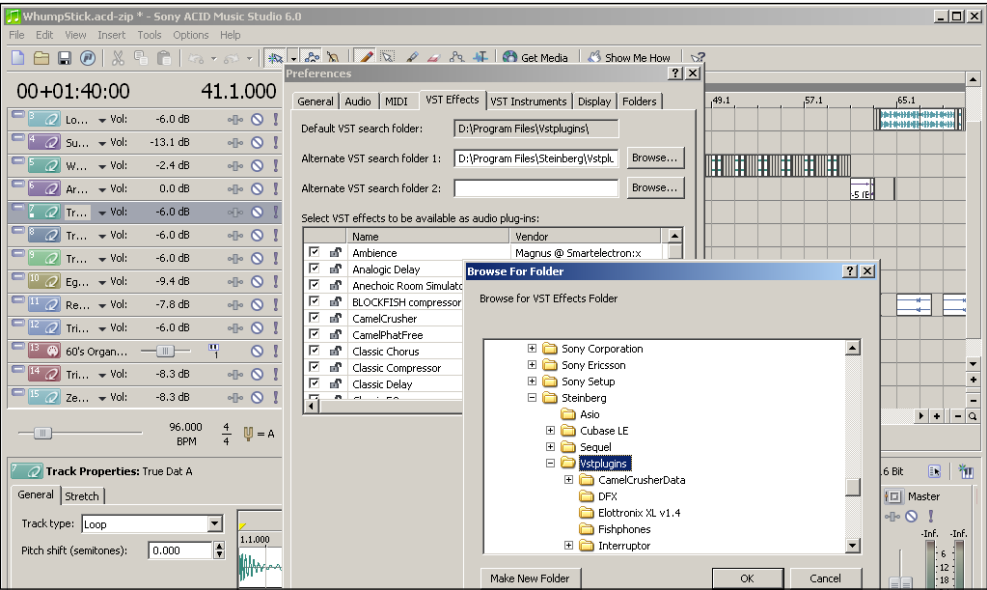
The reason you can't find your VST plug-ins is most likely because different applications have different ideas about where the VST plug-in folder should be. The most common location is C:\Program Files\Vstplugins but some installers put them in C:\Program Files\Steinberg\Vstplugins – not an unreasonable theory considering that Steinberg invented the VST standard.

Some software puts plug-ins in totally daft locations, such as Mackie Traktion's choice of a hidden folder, C:\Documents and Settings\All Users\Application Data\Traktion 3\VST Plugins. You'll need to open an Explorer window and click Tools, Folder

options..., View and select Show hidden files and folders in order to find this folder.

Sony Acid uses C:\Program Files\Vstplugins by default, so one way to activate missing plug-ins is to search for the relevant .dll files on your hard disk and move them to this location. Searching for VST using Windows' search should reveal their whereabouts. However, some instrument plug-ins draw on large banks of samples stored separately, and moving them can confuse the plug-in. In these instances, you might find it easier to point Sony Acid towards the alternative location. You can specify two extra locations on top of the default one by clicking Options, Preferences, VST Effects and browsing to the desired folder. Repeat the process on the VST Instruments tab too if necessary.

Your DirectX plug-ins are suffering the opposite problem. Rather than failing to find the plug-ins you want, it sounds like Acid has found them all, plus a range of other ones that have nothing to do with music making, such as audio and video codecs, video filters and so on. Most music-production software lets you deactivate specific plug-ins, but this isn't an option for DirectX plug-ins in Acid Studio. However, you can organise plug-ins into folders, so the best way to get rid of the ones you don't want is to put them into a folder labelled Rubbish or some other suitably disparaging word. To do so, click an FX button beside one of the tracks to open the Plug-In Chooser, select the folder labelled All, right-click and select New Folder, name it and insert the unwanted plug-ins by dragging and dropping with the mouse. **BP**



▲ Once you've located your VST plug-ins, you can point Acid towards them in the Preferences dialog box

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Feedback Excel VLOOKUP fixed

✉ I read the response to the article about VLOOKUP giving the FALSE parameter as an option to remove the need for a sorted list (*Shopper* November 2007). That too has disadvantages. It is fine if the item being searched for is in the list but, if it isn't, a #N/A is generated. Also, as Excel searches for an item larger than the search item, the search is slower if the list is not sorted, as it has to scan the entire data set. This can be noticeable with large lists or recursive searches (unlikely for most users). An option to

guard against false results is to embed the VLOOKUP in an IF statement with an ISNA check:

```
=IF(ISNA(VLOOKUP(search_item,data,2,FALSE)),"Item not found",VLOOKUP(search_item,data,2,FALSE))
```

This looks cumbersome but gives feedback to the user that what they seek is not there. Better than a #N/A or an invalid return, in my view.

Peter Green

How do I speed up a query?

Q I am using Access 2003, and I've written a query that takes its data from an ODBC database. The query takes a long time to run. Have you got any ideas on how it could be speeded up? The query looks like this:

```
Select OrderDate,
Paytype,
Custno,
Sum(OrdlineAmount) as SumLine
From Ordlines
Group by Orderdate,
Paytype, Custno
Having ((Orderdate)=[Forms].[Form1]!
[Text2]) and
((Paytype)="Card" or
(Paytype)="Cheque") and
((custno)="Cust123"));
```

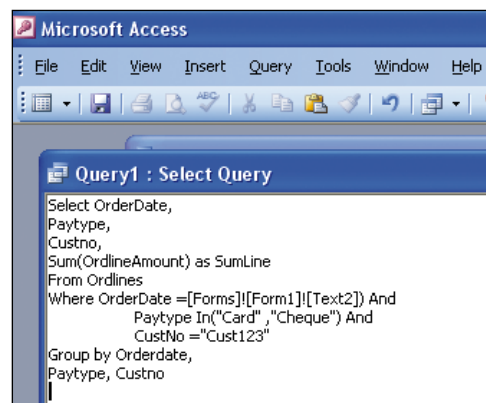
Chris Phillips

A There are several elements of this query that could be better organised. At the moment you're using a Having clause. This is great for restricting groups of rows according to the group level

data, but it works once the records have been selected. If you changed your query to use a Where clause instead, it would restrict the number of rows returned by your query, and minimise the amount of data you have to parse. The Where clause should go after the From clause, and before the Group By clause:

```
Select OrderDate,
Paytype,
Custno,
Sum(OrdlineAmount) as SumLine
From Ordlines
Where OrderDate=[Forms]!Form1!
[Text2]) and
PaytypeIn("Card", "Cheque") and
CustNo ="Cust123"
Group by Orderdate,
Paytype, Custno
```

Searching indexed columns first can help cut down query time. CustNo looks a likely candidate to have an index; if so, put it first in the Where condition as it will be more effectively used there:



▲ Use Where rather than Having to speed up a query

```
Where OrderDate = CustNo ="Cust123"
and
[Forms]![Form1]![Text2]) and
PaytypeIn("Card", "Cheque")
```

You can then get rid of most of your grouping clause as you're finding only one order date and one customer number, so your Group By clause can be shrunk to:

Group by Paytype

KE

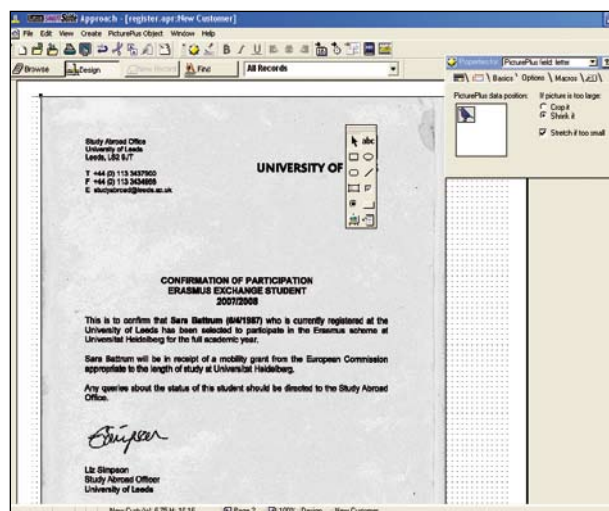
Scanning letters in Approach

Q I have a database that I compiled using Lotus Approach Millennium Version 9.0. I have five existing Tabs covering Personal Name and Address, client contact record, spreadsheet of all records, mortgage details and insurance policy data.

I now want to create a Tab and scan A4 letters or other documentation directly into the database. How can I do this?

Harry Bottomley

A I have not been able to find a way to scan directly into Approach, but what you can do is to scan your documents as standard images, identifying each one in a way that you can identify it easily from within the database.



▲ Set the PicturePlus properties to Shrink or Stretch the image to fit

Add a new field to your database and call it something sensible such as 'letter' or 'document', and set its properties to be a PicturePlus field. In the Options area, set the default object type for the field to a Bitmap Image.

Now open your form in Design view and, on your Document tab, drag the Document field on to the form. Resize the small rectangle that appears to fill the entire page and, on the Options tab for the PicturePlus field, choose to Shrink the image if it is too large for the box or to Stretch it if the picture is too small. That will ensure you always get a document that more or less fills the page when you view it.

To add the scanned image, click on the PicturePlus box while in Browse view and, from the Edit menu, choose Picture, Import. Browse to find the file holding the scan of the document.

If it's not a Bitmap (BMP) file, change the file type to be All Files. When you've found the right document, click on the Import button and your scan will be imported into the form. From this point onwards the scanned document will be stored within the database, even if the original scan is deleted.

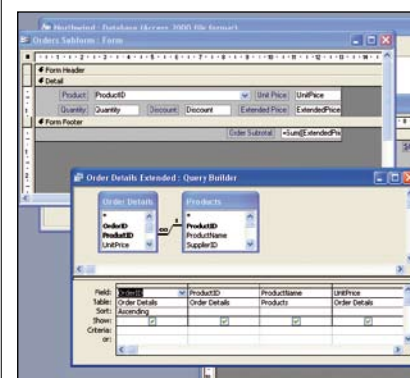
As you need to keep documents for regulatory purposes, I have to say that, being a cautious soul, I'd still keep a copy of the original paper document, too; hard disks crash, databases get corrupted and it's better to be safe than sorry. KE

Sort my sorting problem out

Q I'm using Access 2000 and I have a form with a straightforward Subform. The Recordsource of the subform is a table. My users want to be able to select a column in the subform and sort the data on that column. The problem is that when this happens, they get duplicate rows appearing showing the same information multiple times. This doesn't happen until they sort the subform. Why is this happening and how do I fix it?

J Brown

A Without looking at your table structures and your forms, it's difficult to say why this happens, but it sounds like some sort of indexing problem. If you change the Subform to use a query that is sorted on that column, you should find your duplicate rows disappear. KE



▲ Use a query for subform data to ensure the correct rows are shown

Putting photos in the right order

Q I'm a keen photographer and I want to be able to take a set of digital photographs, work out the order to show them in a slideshow and put them on a DVD to show in that order. My problem is that while I can re-arrange the images in a folder in Windows XP, when I copy the images from that folder they go back to the 'original' order.

I have folders with many images – over 250 is quite common – so I don't want to rename them all by hand to get them into the 'right' order. I don't want to use Media Player to organise the slideshow because not all DVD players recognise its format.

Simon

A This sounds as though it ought to be a standard setting in Windows XP, but it isn't. When files are moved or copied to a DVD they are put back into name order.

The solution to your problem is multi-part. The first task is to put the photos into the order you want. Next, make a new folder and copy the files from the original folder into there. You should find that they are copied in the correct order. This step is only necessary to avoid problems if you make a mistake while carrying out the rest of the process as you'll still have the originals to fall back on.

Now open the new folder. Hold the Ctrl key down and press the letter A to select all the files in the folder. Right-click on the first file, and click on Rename on the pop-up menu that appears. You now have the chance to rename the files. Enter a name, such as 'Image (101).jpg' (this has a space after the word Image and before the 101). You also need to use a three-

digit number for the number element as we'll need consistency in the names later, and you need to keep the file's extension, such as .jpg.

Press Enter and Windows will automatically rename all the files in this folder Image (101).jpg, Image (102).jpg, Image (103).jpg and so on. They will open in that order and be copied to a disc in that order. We had to include the parentheses in our start name as Windows XP uses parentheses no matter what you do when using this form of renaming.

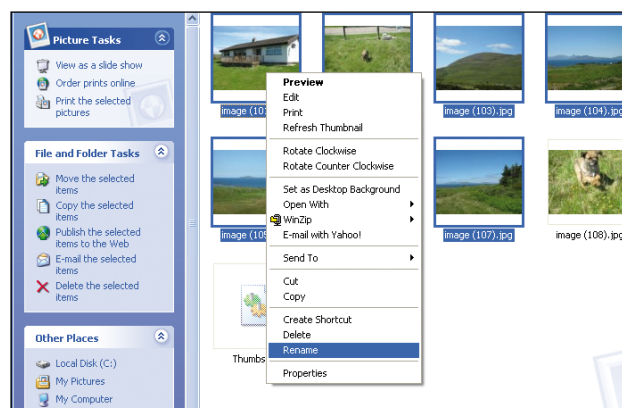
Unfortunately, while it looks as though the renaming ought to be enough, the photos still display in the 'wrong' order when viewed on a disc. To overcome this, we need a macro to remove the parentheses from renamed files. The macro given below works in Microsoft Word and assumes that the files are stored in C:\simonpics and have an extension of .jpg.

To use the macro for renaming files elsewhere, you'd need to change the line:

```
MyPath = "c:\simonpics"
```

to point to the folder where you're going to store the renamed files.

```
Sub renamepics()  
Dim OldName, NewName  
Dim MyFile, MyPath, MyName  
MyPath = "c:\simonpics"
```



▲ Use the Windows Rename option to rename groups of files

```
ChDir MyPath  
MyName = Dir("*.*", vbDirectory)  
Do While MyName <> ""  
    ' Start the loop.  
    NewName = Replace(MyName, "(", "")  
    NewName = Replace(NewName, ")", "")  
    Name MyName As NewName  
    MyName = Dir ' Get next entry  
Loop  
End Sub
```

The macro is fairly simple; all it does is use the Replace command to replace a '(' with nothing, then the next line again uses Replace to replace a ')' with nothing.

If you run the macro, it should change the filenames to Image 101.jpg, Image 102.jpg and so on. After this, you can copy those files to a DVD and they should come up in the right order on your DVD player. **KE**

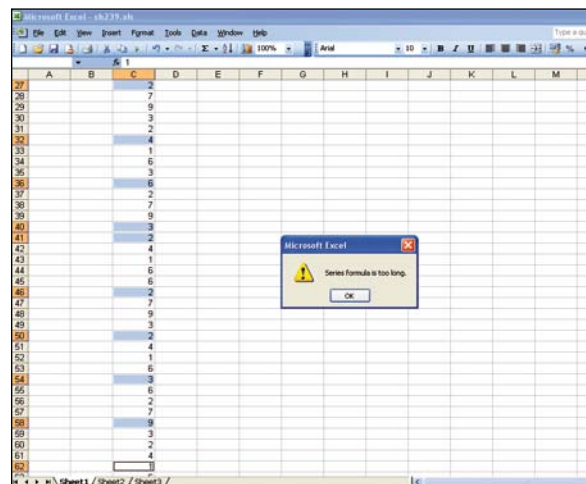
Bar chart confusion in Excel

Q I'm trying to create a bar chart in Excel, and I have a lot of data values to plot: four groups of over 30 entries each, with the data listed in a single column. Group one has its data on rows 6, 10, 14, 18 and so on, group two has

its data in rows 7, 11, 15 and 19, group three has data in rows 8, 12, 16 and 20, while group four has its data in rows 9, 13, 17. I want to have a bar chart that lets me compare the four groups.

My problem is that the chart wizard cannot cope with so many data values. I'm creating a bar chart with four series. For each series, I go down the column using Ctrl-click to select the correct items for that series. This works fine until I get to the 20th item in the series. At this point, the series returns to empty. If I try a different route – for example, by highlighting 20 items then choosing Insert, Chart from the menu – I get an error message saying that the series formula is too long. Is there a way to extend the number of items you can have in a series in Excel?

Trinnie Cuthbertson



▲ Keep series formulae simple to avoid problems in Excel

A It's not the number of items that's causing you problems, it's the way in which you're building the series. You can't have more than 1,024 characters in a series formula, and because you're selecting each item individually, the cell references are building into a long string.

What you need to do is to replace your long character string with a shorter one, either by moving your data values into four separate columns or, if that's not possible, then by creating columns that refer to the cells containing the values.

The simplest way to do this is to use a formula that refers directly to the cells. For example, assuming that your data is in column C, enter the following:

```
=C6  
=C10  
=C14  
=C18
```

and so on. Excel will then be able to create a bar chart for the four groups using the data in these cells. **KE**

Printing company wants me to bleed

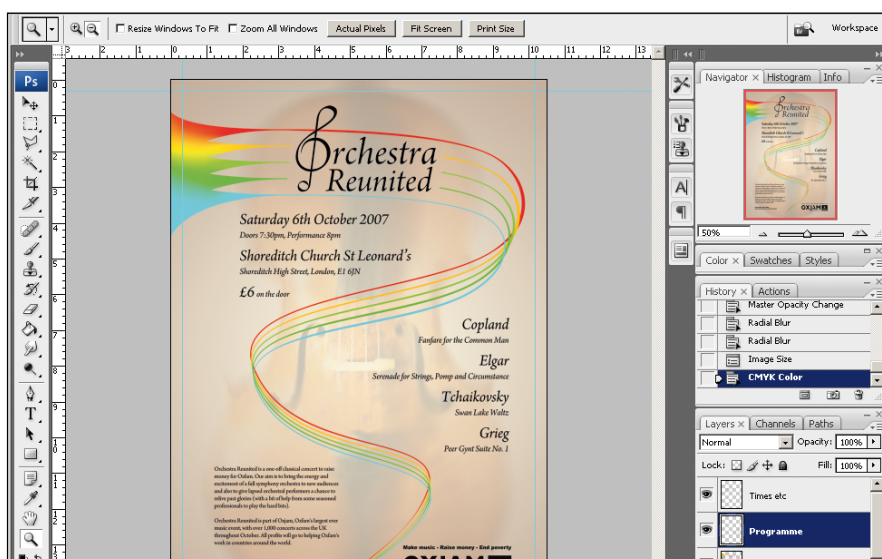
Q I've been asked to design a flyer for a charity event, which I'm doing in Microsoft Word. I've done a basic design, but the printing company's website says that a 3mm bleed is required. What is this, and how do I make it?

Timothy Pilen

A We would advise against designing a flyer that's destined for professional printing using Microsoft Word. Many printing services won't accept .doc files at all, as it's not the most reliable format for preserving precise formatting and layouts. You're better off using a dedicated desktop-publishing or image-editing package, where you can be confident that your printed flyers will match your design.

Most commercial printers request artwork in CMYK colour, which matches the inks used for printing, rather than RGB, as used by digital cameras, so choose software that supports this, such as Corel Paint Shop Pro. If you don't want to invest time and money in a new application, discuss with your printing firm whether it can accept a .doc file and can email you back a PDF 'proof' – a final copy for you to check.

A bleed is a border that extends beyond the edges of the design to allow for slight discrepancies when cutting paper to the correct size. Unlike modern inkjet printers, professional printing presses aren't designed to print right up to the edges of paper, so for edge-to-edge printing, the artwork is printed on oversized paper and trimmed to the correct size afterwards. If the cutting machine is just a



▲ The bleed is an extra strip around the edges of artwork to avoid problems if the paper is badly trimmed

millimetre or two out, there's a risk that you'll end up with an unprinted strip down one side of the paper. However, extending the background colour or image by 3mm avoids this problem. This extra 3mm strip is known as the bleed.

It's fairly safe to assume that the bleed won't be visible on the finished prints – it's just a precaution. However, you should ensure that any critical parts of your design are at least 3mm away from the edge (6mm including the bleed), as if you end up seeing 3mm of bleed on one side, you'll lose 3mm of your design on the other.

In practice, this means that your artwork should be 6mm taller and 6mm wider than the paper dimensions you're working towards – this adds 3mm of bleed to the top, bottom, left and right sides. So, for an A6 flyer, which is 105x148.5mm, you should create a document that's 111x154.5mm. Make sure that any background colour or image extends all the way to the edges. Also make sure that any text, logos or other graphics are at least 6mm away from the edges – 3mm from the actual edge of the design, plus the 3mm bleed. **BP**

How do I stop typing in capitals?

Q I occasionally hit the Caps Lock key when I'm writing. As I'm a poor typist, I tend to look at the keyboard, not the screen, so I often find I've typed a sentence in upper case without realising it. I know that in Word I can use the Format Menu to change the case, but is there an easier option? I'm considering taking the top off the Caps Lock key, but is there some way to tell Word to ignore it instead?

Mike

A There are several things you can do. For a start, if you discover that you've typed text in upper case in Microsoft Word, you can select the upper-case text then use Shift-F3 to cycle through the various case options – upper case, lower case and initial letters of words capitalised.

An option to warn you when you accidentally turn on the Caps Lock (or the Num Lock or Scroll Lock) is available from the Accessibility option in the Control Panel. If you select the option for Toggle Keys, you'll hear a warning beep when you select Caps Lock or the other locks, so that you will at least be warned.

The final option is rather more drastic, and involves remapping the keys in the Windows Registry. As always, you should be very cautious before editing the Registry, as you can cause damage that will result in your computer being unusable. Only follow the next steps if you know what you are doing and have made a backup of the Registry.

You need to map the code from the Caps Lock key to the Left Shift key (that being the key you were most likely attempting to hit when you accidentally pressed Caps Lock).

Start the Registry editor, and navigate to the following key:

```
HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SYSTEM\
CurrentControlSet\Control\Keyboard
Layout
```

Within this you need to create a Reg_binary entry called Scancode Map, and set its value to be:

```
00000000 00000000 0200000000 2A003A00
00000000
```

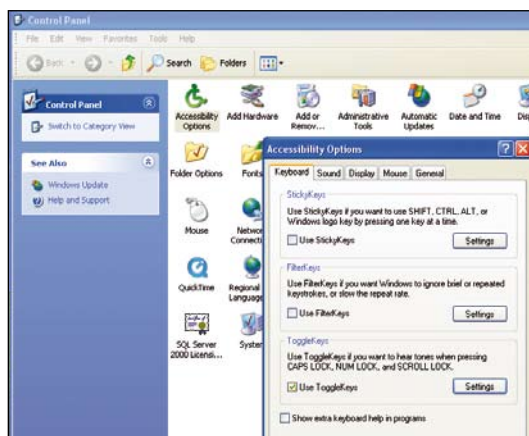
When you've entered this, the 'modify' window should look like this:

Value Name: Scancode Map

Value data:

```
0000 00 0000000000000000
0008 02 00 0000 2A 00 3A 00
0010 00 000000
```

You can then exit the Registry editor. You'll need to restart your machine for the remapping to take place. Personally, I'd be quite tempted to remove the top from the Caps Lock key – it's low tech but remarkably reliable! **KE**



▲ Set Toggle Keys in the Accessibility options to hear a warning when you hit the Caps Lock key